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THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Vincent A. Meli et al.

) Art Unit: 3201

Serial No.: 08/098,752

Examiner: L. Johnson

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REC[®]

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR For:

MAR 2 0 1997 FORMING AND HERMETICALLY

SEALING SLICES OF FOOD ITEMS

GROUP 3200

RULE 115 AMENDMENT

Honorable Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks Washington, D.C. 20231

Dear Sir:

In response to the non-final Office Action mailed January 9, 1997, Applicants respond as follows.

IN THE ABSTRACT:

An apparatus and method for continuously forming hermetically sealed packages of a food item. A continuous web of thermoplastic material is folded and continuously formed with a hermetic longitudinal seal. The food item is inserted between inner surfaces of the tubular web member, which is then flattened to form a thin slice. A hermetic crossseal is continuously formed transverse to the longitudinal seal. The web can be cooled before the cross-seals are formed.